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RESEARCH ON THE USE OF A COUNSELEE PROBLEM CLASSIFICATION PLAN AT THE JUNIOR HIGH LEVEL.

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A CLASSIFICATION PLAN FOR MAINTAINING CONFIDENTIAL RECORDS WAS CONSTRUCTED TO HELP THE COUNSELOR SAVE TIME AND STILL HAVE A USABLE RECORD OF HIS SESSIONS AND, WHEN ALL RECORDS ARE ANALYZED AND SUMMARIZED, TO PROVIDE INFORMATION ABOUT THE TYPES OF PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED BY STUDENTS. THE SCHOOL COUNSELOR CLASSIFICATION CATEGORIES CONSISTED OF (1) TWO MAJOR PROBLEM AREAS, INFORMATION GIVING AND PERSONAL-EMOTIONAL, (2) SIX STIMULUS CATEGORIES (THE COUNSELOR'S SUBJECTIVE EVALUATION OF WHY THE COUNSELEE SEEKS COUNSELING OR WHAT CAUSES THE PROBLEM), SELF-UNDERSTANDING, ENVIRONMENTAL UNDERSTANDING, SELF-CONFLICT, OTHER'S CONFLICT, ACADEMIC DIFFICULTIES, GENERAL, AND (3) THE REFERRAL CATEGORIES (INDICATES HOW THE STUDENT ENTERS COUNSELING), SELF, TEACHER, ADMINISTRATOR, PARENT, FRIEND, AND COUNSELOR. COUNSELEES ARE ALSO CLASSIFIED BY SEX, GRADE, AND LENGTH OF TIME INVOLVED FOR EACH COUNSELING SESSION. A SUMMARY OF CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STUDENT POPULATION OF HOOD MEMORIAL JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL IS BASED ON A STUDY OF 206 INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING SESSIONS AND 51 MULTIPLE SESSIONS USING THE CLASSIFICATION PLAN AS THE BASIC SOURCE OF INFORMATION. A COPY OF THE CLASSIFICATION PLAN IS INCLUDED. (PS)

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RESEARCH ON THE USE OF A COUNSELEE PROBLEM CLASSIFICATION PLAN AT THE JUNIOR HIGH LEVEL

by

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CG 000 101

INTRODUCTION

There is a continual demand on the counselor's time to perform the variety of duties requested of him. The counselor is continuously searching for more "time to counsel." One of the serious demands on the counselor's services is the seemingly endless record-keeping duties involved. Some of these duties could be eliminated by the use of secretarial help, but some, by necessity, must be performed by the counselor himself.

Because of the need for confidentiality in the counseling relationship, the counselor must maintain his own counseling notes and records. For this purpose, a classification plan that will save time and still provide the counselor with a worthwhile record of his sessions is essential. These records, when analyzed and summarized, should also enable the counselor to know and understand the types of problems experienced by the particular student body which he serves.

Description of the instrument.--The school counselor classification categories consists of two major problem areas, six stimulus categories, and six referral categories. Students will be classified by (1) problem, (2) stimulus and (3) referral. The two problem categories are (1) information giving and (2) personal-emotional. If the problem is judged information giving, it becomes guidance in nature. If it is deemed personal-emotional,

it denotes the need for affective counseling. This refers to the developed problem and not necessarily the presented one. It might be said that it is the problem which the counselor and counselee agree to work on and do so.

The stimulus category is the counselor's subjective evaluation of why the counselee seeks counseling or what causes the problem that necessitates counseling. There are six stimulus areas which are:

1. Self Understanding (SU): lacking insight into oneself. May not understand his inner workings or simply does not know enough about himself in relation to certain groups.

2. Environmental Understanding (EU): Lacking adequate knowledge about one's environment such as college requirement or distorting the available information. This may result from limited experiences on the part of the counselee or gaps in his education.

3. Self Conflict (SC): Counselee has conflicting and competing motivations within self and attitudes that are contradictory. Underestimators, overestimators, distorted self concepts, etc. would fall under this cause.

4. Others Conflict (OC): Counselees experience difficulty existing in the same environment with significant others and are in conflict with teachers, parents, friends, etc.

5. Academic difficulties (AD): Counselees who lack the skill or ability to handle the academic responsibilities of the school. Poor school adjustment may result from such academic deficiencies as a lack of reading skills, study habits, social skills, etc.

6. General (G): Counselee problems caused by other reasons than those previously mentioned. Examples might be such guidance tasks as school orientation assisting students to select a course of study, etc.

The referral category is the one which answers the question: "Who encouraged you to enter counseling?" The categories are (1) Self: came in on his own; (2) Teacher: referred by one of the instructional staff members; (3) Administration: a principal or vice principal referral; (4) Parent: a request to talk with a student made through the parent; (5) Friend: referred to counseling by one of his peer group and (6) Counselor: student entered counseling because of a counselor request.

Counselees are classified by sex and grade.

The length of time involved for counseling sessions is recorded as follows:

1. Less than 15 minutes
2. 16 to 30 minutes
3. 31-45 minutes
4. 46-60 minutes
5. Over an hour

Locale and period of study.--The plan as described above was used by this counselor in Hood Memorial Junior High School, Derry, New Hampshire, in an effort to determine its practicality and effectiveness as a classification instrument at the junior high level. This particular junior high houses grades seven and eight and has a student population of 312.

This classification system was used from the beginning of school in September of 1966 to February 1, 1967.

Limitations of the study.--No real conclusive results can be ascertained by this study because of some serious

limitations: (1) Prior to this year, the students of this school had been without the services of a counselor. At the beginning of the school year, the counselor devoted much of his time describing his role to administrators, teachers, and students; (2) The counselor works as a consultant on the elementary level. This involves a great deal of time--limiting counseling time at the junior high level; (3) The short period of time that this particular student population was studied presents results that can only be used as indicators. It is quite feasible that as the counselees gain confidence in the counselor that they will discuss problems of a different nature.

Results of the study.--This counselor recorded a total of 206 individual counseling sessions and 51 multiple counseling sessions, for a total of 257 sessions. By grades, 117 of the individual sessions and 33 of the multiple counseling sessions, or 58.4 per cent, involved eighth grade clients. The counselees for 89 individual sessions and 18 multiple counseling sessions, or a total of 41.6 per cent, were seventh grade students.

Problem Category

Two problem categories were used in this classification plan: (1) Information Giving--which was concerned with providing the student with information classified or considered as guidance in nature, and (2) Personal-Emotional--involving personal and social adjustment problems which necessitate counseling.

Relative to the problem category, the counselor classified 112 of the 206 individual sessions and 25 of the 51 multiple

counseling sessions, or a total of 53.3 per cent, in the realm of "Information Giving." The remaining 94 individual and 26 multiple sessions, or 46.7 per cent, were categorized as being "Personal-Emotional" in nature.

Stimulus Category

This category involves the counselor's subjective evaluation relative to the reason why the counselee seeks counseling or what caused the problem that necessitates counseling. Six stimulus areas were used:

1. Self understanding--Ten individual and only one multiple counseling sessions were recorded in this stimulus area (4.28%).

2. Environmental understanding--Only five counseling sessions were recorded in this area, while no multiple counseling sessions were considered in this category (1.94%).

3. Self conflict--Twenty-five individual and two multiple counseling sessions were assigned this classification (10.5%).

4. Others conflict--This particular classification ranked second in frequency of the stimulus categories--fifty-three individual and twenty-three multiple counseling sessions (29.57%). Relative to the individual sessions, nine sessions were recorded as involving parental conflicts, teacher conflicts were listed in twenty-nine sessions, and conflicts with other students were the main concern of fifteen sessions. Student-teacher conflicts led the reasons for the group sessions, also, with seventeen recorded in this area, four group sessions had student conflicts as a basis, with one parental and one administrative conflict being listed.

5. Academic difficulties--Academic difficulty was the basis for twenty-nine individual sessions, but no multiple sessions were categorized in this area (11.28%).

6. General--This was the largest category with eighty-four individual sessions and twenty-five multiple counseling sessions recorded in this area (42.41%).

> Classified under this "general" category were such things as high school registration, division changes, career guidance, special schools consideration, discussion of test results, special course schedules, discussion on special clubs, newspapers, special tests, etc. Most of these sessions would be considered guidance in nature, and would be listed under the problem category of "Informational Giving."

Referral Category

This particular category is concerned with identifying those responsible for encouraging the student to enter counseling. The following six categories were used: (1) self, (2) teacher, (3) administration, (4) parent, (5) friend, and (6) counselor.

Relative to the individual counseling sessions, it is noted that 70.9 per cent of the clients were self-referred, 25.7 per cent were "called in" by the counselor, 2.4 per cent were referred by parents, while the remaining .48 per cent were referred by a teacher.

With reference to the multiple sessions, forty-five of the students, 90.2 per cent, were self-referred and the remaining six, 9.8 per cent, entered counseling because of a counselor request.

The self-referral concept is in accordance with the philosophy of this counselor, therefore, it is not surprising that 191 of the total 257 counseling sessions, or 74.31 per cent, were initiated by the counselees themselves.

The greatest number of those students "called in" by the counselor would fall into the stimulus categories of "academic difficulties" and the "general" category.

Sex

A total of 134 individual counseling sessions were entered in by boys, as compared with 72 sessions with girls. When considering those who sought counseling more than once, the figures indicate that the counselor saw a total of 72 different boys and 46 girls.

Inconsistent with the above results, it is noted that more girls entered multiple counseling than boys. There were 33 multiple counseling sessions with girls, 17 with boys, and one mixed boys and girls session.

Length of Session

Length of counseling sessions varied, but the greatest number of the individual counseling sessions, 112 sessions or 54.3 per cent, was between 16-30 minutes. Sixty-seven sessions (32.5%) were fifteen minutes each, sixteen sessions (7.7%) extended between 31-45 minutes, six (2.9%) were 45-60 minutes in length, and the remaining five (2.4%) were over an hour in duration.

The multiple counseling sessions nearly all fell in the period of 16-30 minutes, 41 out of 51 or 80.4 per cent. Four sessions (7.8%) lasted fifteen minutes or less, four (7.8%) fell in the time period of 31-45 minutes, and two (3.9%) were extended a period of 45-60 minutes.

Discussion.--A number of factors can be noted from the results of the Hood Memorial Junior High counseling sessions acquired through the use of the counselee problem classification plan.

The problem category indicates that junior high students experience many personal-emotional problems that they wish to relate to someone. Nearly as many of the sessions were recorded in the area of personal-emotional as information giving. There are situations when it becomes difficult, however, to determine whether a problem is really guidance in nature or personal-emotional. The use of this plan provokes furtner thought and consideration by a conscientious counselor when he is classifying the counseling relationship which he has just experienced.

The results of the stimulus category would point out that junior high students experience many conflicts. A total of 27 sessions (10.5%) were recorded as involving some kind of self-conflict, while a total of 76 sessions (29.5%) involved conflict with significant others--parents, other students, administrators, or teachers.

In our particular school system, grades one through six experience heterogeneous ability grouping in self-contained classrooms. The seventh and eighth graders are homogeneously grouped by ability in a departmentalized situation. This means that students must not only adjust to changing classes, but they must adjust to several different teachers and the competition created by homogeneous classes. This not only creates conflicts, but causes many students frustrations academically, particularly those in the scholastically superior classes. This might help explain the twenty-nine counseling sessions (11.28%) categorized under the stimulus category of "academic difficulties."

These conditions also might cause concern relative to self-understanding. Students, perhaps, begin to question their ability when they find that it is much more difficult to experience success in school than it had been previously.

Eighth grade students have to begin to think about their high school programs, which involves some decision-making relative to their careers. This causes some problems since college and careers are still perceived as being somewhat futuristic to an eighth grade student. This may account for many of the sessions which are categorized under the stimulus category of "General."

Since 74.31 per cent of the counseling sessions were self-initiated, there is no question but what junior high students will seek out counseling on their own volition.

Sixty counseling sessions, 23.34 per cent, were initiated by the counselor. "Academic difficulty," followed by division changes, was the chief reason for counselor referrals. Course changes, discussions on special schools, and special schedules were some of the other important reasons for counselor referrals.

One teacher referral and no administrative referrals might indicate a weakness in the counselor's present program. This might be an area which needs some improvement.

It is difficult to determine whether a student enters counseling because he has been encouraged by a friend. It is likely that a great number of the people who referred themselves did so through the encouragement of a friend.

As previously indicated, more boys received individual counseling than girls, but the reverse was true for multiple

counseling, where twice as many sessions were held with girls. This can be attributed, in part, because 41 of the 134 individual sessions (30.6%) with boy clients involved counselor referrals where only 15 of the 72 girls' sessions (20.8%) were counselor initiated. This might indicate that boys experience more academic difficulties than girls at the junior high level (eleven boys were called in for academic reasons as opposed to four girls). Perhaps, also, girls might be more reluctant to discuss problems with a male counselor alone, or they feel more comfortable when supported by friends in the counseling relationship. Twice as many girls entered multiple counseling than boys. Are boys more reluctant to discuss or admit to their friends that they have certain problems?

Most counseling sessions lasted for forty-five minutes or less, with 16-30 minutes receiving the most frequency tallies. Personal-emotional problems constituted most of those sessions which were more than forty-five minutes in length.

Summary.--This brief, incomplete study points out the vast amount of information that a counselor can acquire relative to his student population by using a counselee problem classification plan. Obviously, much more research must be done over a more extensive period of time before more conclusive results can be ascertained.

This study has definite limitations and the findings should not be the basis for any definite conclusions. However,

the findings do suggest the following possibilities: (a) the counselee problem classification plan can be a useful device for helping school counselors understand the types of counseling problems confronting them at the junior high level; (b) that junior high student experience many personal-emotional problems which requires a great deal of this type of counseling, indicating a need for a skillful counselor; (c) that students at this level experience a great deal of conflicts with others - teachers, parents, and other students; (d) that the problems of self conflicts and the lack of self understanding are important concerns at the junior high level; (e) that apparently more boys experience academic difficulties at this level than girls; (f) that more males seek individual counseling, but more females seek counseling in groups - at least with a male counselor; (g) that the large majority of counselees are self referrals; (h) that a majority of the counseling sessions last less than thirty minutes; (i) that sessions requiring more than thirty minutes tend to be personal-emotional in nature; and (j) that eighth grade students demand more of the counselor's time than seventh graders because of educational and vocational planning.

COUNSELING SESSIONS
HOOD MEMORIAL JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

CATEGORIES	INDIVIDUAL SESSIONS	MULTIPLE SESSIONS	TOTAL	PERCENT
GRADE				
eight	117	33	150	58.4
seven	89	18	107	41.6
PROBLEM CATEGORY				
Information Giving	112	25	137	53.3
Personal-Emotional	94	26	120	46.7
STIMULUS CATEGORY				
Self understanding	10	1	11	4.28
Environmental Understanding	5	0	5	1.94
Self conflict	25	2	27	10.50
Others conflict	53	23	76	29.57
Academic difficulties	29	0	29	11.28
General	84	25	109	42.41
REFERRAL CATEGORY				
Self	146	45	191	74.31
Teacher	1	0	1	.38
Administration	0	0	0	.00
Parent	5	0	5	1.94
Friend	0	0	0	.00
Counselor	54	6	60	23.34
SEX				
Male	134	17	151	58.35
Female	72	34	106	41.65
LENGTH OF SESSION				
Less than 15 minutes	67	4	71	27.62
16-30 minutes	112	41	153	59.53
31-45 minutes	16	4	20	7.77
46-60 minutes	6	2	8	3.11
Over an hour	5	0	5	1.94

COUNSELOR INTERVIEW

NAME _____ GRADE _____ SESSION _____ DATE _____

I. PROBLEM CATEGORY:

1. Information giving _____ 2. Personal-emotional _____

II. Stimulus Category:

1. (SU) ___ 2. (EU) ___ 3. (SC) ___ 4. (OC) ___ 5. (AD) ___ 6. (G) ___

III. Referral Category:

1. Self ___ 2. Teacher ___ 3. Administration ___ 4. Parent ___

5. Friend ___ 6. Counselor ___

IV. Sex: Male _____ Female _____

V. Length of Sessions:

Less than 15 min. _____
16-30 minutes _____
31-45 minutes _____
46-60 minutes _____
over an hour _____

COMMENTS: